Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food

Farm & Food Report

Communications Branch, Walter Scott Building
3085 Albert Street, Regina, Canada, S4S 0B1

Saskatchewan

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Log Number: 06-39-177
Week of September 25, 2006

NEW WINTER CEREALS COMMISSION PROVIDES A VOICE TO FARMERS

Saskatchewan's new Winter Cereals Development Commission provides an instrument to develop new market opportunities, research, technologies and products for winter cereal grain producers.

"This way, the producer has the power over how their money is spent," said Rod Fedoruk, interim chairperson of the new commission. "We are investing in our own industry to catalyze more support and investment by governments and researchers in winter cereals."

The Saskatchewan Winter Cereals Development Commission was announced by Agriculture and Food Minister Mark Wartman on August 23. He described its work as "an effort to increase the profitability of producers through the development of improved agronomic practices, new varieties and new market opportunities."

Funding for the commission will come from a mandatory but refundable producer check-off of 50 cents per net tonne of winter wheat, fall rye and winter triticale. The check-off, to begin on October 1, will be deducted by buyers at the first point of sale and is expected to generate approximately $131,000 per year in revenue. The 2006 fiscal year funding is expected to be less, as most stocks of winter cereals have already been sold.

There are approximately 2,200 winter cereals producers in Saskatchewan with an estimated acreage of 500,000 acres per year, the majority of which are planted to winter wheat. The crop is estimated to be generating about $75 million per year in revenue to Saskatchewan producers.

Fedoruk is a seed grower in the Kamsack area. He is also a board member of Winter Cereals Canada Inc., the company founded by producers across the West to promote winter cereal grain production and consumer uptake. The company's CEO, Jake Davidson, said the Saskatchewan move to establish a commission is a big step forward for the industry.

"We also expect Manitoba to set up a winter cereals commission shortly. Then we will be able to co-ordinate their efforts through Winter Cereals Canada," he stated. According to Davidson, the money collected from producers from the winter cereals check-off will mainly be used to invest in further research on new varieties.

(more)

Demand for winter wheat is actually outstripping supply in the world market. "The Canadian Wheat Board says they can sell every bit of winter wheat we can produce," Fedoruk said.

Winter wheat is not only a high-yield crop, returning up to 70 bushels per acre, but an important form of soil conservation and also a habitat for wildfowl. Ducks Unlimited is an important player in working with producers to expand winter cereals production.

The upcoming season is expected to show the highest acreage ever seeded to winter wheat in Saskatchewan, due to the early harvest of spring grains providing more opportunity for fall seeding.

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CWB LOOKING TO RECOGNIZE "MASTER GROWERS"

Everybody knows Canadian prairie farmers grow the best grain in the world. This year, the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) will once again be recognizing the "best of the best" through its 2006-07 Master Grower awards program.

CWB agronomist Mike Grenier explained what the awards are all about. "The Master Grower program is our way of recognizing the achievements of Canada's prairie grain farmers," he said. "It rewards top producers and allows their knowledge to be shared with the rest of the Western Canadian grain industry."

Here's how the program works: farmers submit a grain sample from this year's harvest to the CWB. Samples are inspected by both CWB and quality experts, and judged on visual quality, end-use market suitability and crop management practices. The producers whose entries achieve the highest overall scores in these three categories are designated as Master Growers. They receive a special leather and melton wool jacket, a recognition plaque and an invitation to attend a unique Canadian International Grains Institute course as part of their award.

But Grenier noted there's more to the honour than that. "There's a lot of pride in being named a Master Grower. You can see it on the faces of the award recipients each year," he said.

"These producers are really part of an exclusive club of the most successful farmers. As a result, the CWB also attempts to share the crop management techniques and practices of these growers with other producers in the industry."

For the 2006-07 crop year (beginning August 1, 2006 and ending July 31, 2007), Master Grower awards will be handed out for four classes of cereal grains: malting barley, select red winter wheat, hard white spring wheat and durum.

Farmers can obtain entry forms and envelopes to send in their samples from their local CWB farm business representative, from elevator companies or by phoning 1-800-275-4292. More information on the Master Grower program can also be found on the CWB website at www.cwb.ca, under the "Growing Grain" heading.

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The 2006-07 CWB Master Growers will be announced at the GrainWorld outlook conference in Winnipeg in February 2007.

Grenier said Saskatchewan producers have traditionally done very well in these awards, noting that four of the 10 Master Growers named last year were from the province.

Controlled by Western Canadian farmers, the CWB is the largest wheat and barley marketer in the world. As one of Canada's biggest exporters, the Winnipeg-based company sells grain to more than 70 countries and returns all sales revenue, less marketing costs, to prairie farmers.

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ETHANOL PLANNING SYMPOSIUM FOR SOUTHWEST

The first-ever Saskatchewan Ethanol Symposium is planned for October 12 in Shaunavon.

The symposium includes a tradeshow highlighting initiatives in the region, as well as the various stakeholders in the developing ethanol industry. It is a full-day event, with a barbeque lunch and a banquet supper.

The conference, entitled "Ethanol: A New Future for the Southwest Producer," stemmed from a recent alliance between Cypress Agri-Energy Inc. (CAE) of Shaunavon and the Action Southwest Business Networks Coalition. CAE is a proposed 90 million litre per year ethanol plant. Action Southwest is a strategic economic alliance of business, government, education and community leaders focused on building a unified regional economy in southwestern Saskatchewan.

The two organizations hope to bring more awareness to producers and stakeholders in the area about the potential for ethanol in the southwest.

CAE has been working with the Saskatchewan Ethanol Development Council (SEDC), the provincial government and other ethanol project developers to urge the federal government to provide financial support for ethanol in Saskatchewan. Lionel Labelle, president of the SEDC, will be the master of ceremonies for the event, as well as a keynote speaker. Clay Serby, Deputy Premier and Minister of Regional Economic and Co-operative Development, is also a featured speaker.

The symposium will bring in ethanol experts from across Canada and the United States. Presenters include Judie Dyck of the Biodiesel Development Task Force, Michael Allen of the Ethanol Producers and Consumers board, Larry Johnson, a renowned expert on the ethanol industry, Kory Teneycke of the Canadian Renewable Fuels Association, and Mike Bryan of BBI International.

"Our group sees the impact the ethanol industry has had in the U.S., with estimations as high as $150 million a year for certain regions," says Sandra Blyth, Project Manager with Action Southwest.

"The economic impact of this plant could literally transform our economy by creating demand for local goods and services, stimulating additional local investment, generating tax revenues locally and provincially, invigorating local grain markets and adding value to our products and services."

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The symposium is open to anyone interested in learning about the economic impact of ethanol development. Tickets are limited, so book early to ensure your seat. Tickets can be arranged through Karri Sachkowski of Cypress Agri-Energy at (306) 297-3313.

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PASTURE MANAGEMENT KEY FOR CATTLE INDUSTRY

With the total cattle herd in Saskatchewan somewhere in the range of 3.45 million animals, proper pasture management is always an important aspect of the province's agricultural sector.

This year is no exception. With drier conditions in some parts of the province, community pasture managers are keeping a close eye on the state of their rangeland and putting their expertise to work.

Blake Kohls is the Southern Regional Manager for the Saskatchewan Pastures Program with Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food. He is responsible for over 400,000 acres of rangeland and the 36,000 head of cattle that use the community pastures in his area.

Kohls stated that lower moisture conditions can quickly limit plant growth and reduce forage yields. It can also limit root growth, making plants less capable of reaching what little moisture is in the ground. Kohls said native grasses are less susceptible to these problems, and the nutritional value will remain high right into the fall, but tame grass will see a drop-off in quality.

"The food value really starts to deteriorate in some of the tame grass later in the year, and especially in a dry season. So in those cases, you have to watch the condition of the cattle closely," he noted.

Reduced forage yield can have a significant impact on cattle health, from reduced weight gain to more open cows and late conception.

As a result, proper pasture management is essential to the well-being of the industry.

Kohls indicated there are a number of rangeland management techniques that might be applied to pastures facing lower moisture levels, including reducing animal numbers to balance livestock needs with forage supply, and grazing management practices such as herding or fencing out stock water sources.

In some southwestern community pastures, for example, Kohls noted that they are looking at sending some cattle home 10 days to two weeks earlier than would normally be anticipated.

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"It's a matter of the range conditions," he said. "The range conditions are going to be such that we're going to want to have enough carryover for the 2007 season, and in doing so, we just don't have the plant matter there this year to extend our grazing season well into the middle of October, as we might in other years."

More information on the Saskatchewan Pastures Program can be found on the Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food website at www.agr.gov.sk.ca, under Crown Lands/Pasture.

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